

CHINESE AGGRESSION

Why and How It Failed

HANOI — 1979

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ONE MONTH OF RESISTANCE TO CHINESE AGGRESSION : A SUMMING-UP

On 5 March 1979 the Chinese leaders in Peking made a public proclamation to the effect that they had "achieved their target of punishing Vietnam" and begun withdrawing their troops back to China. Their colossal propaganda machinery was set in motion to praise their "glorious victory" to the skies. The "valiant fighters of the southward expedition" were said to have been welcomed home to the beating of gongs and drums and awarded silk flowers and medals.

What are the facts ?

When they took the decision to invade Vietnam, the Chinese rulers could not be ignorant of a few facts about their adversary : the Vietnamese people in the course of their long history had repeatedly defeated invasions from the north, and more recently had got the better of two major imperialisms — the French, then the American.

And yet they were confident that they could achieve certain results by relying on numbers and surprise. Their other trumps included

geographical proximity and the large numbers of Hoa people who had left Vietnam for China: these could serve as guides and auxiliaries. The way would thus be opened for the conquest of the whole of Vietnam, Indochina, Southeast Asia, and beyond.

According to what had transpired from Peking, the invasion was aimed at the following targets:

1. Quick occupation of a strip along the border, about a few dozen kilometres in depth, which would include the towns of Cao Bang, Lang Son and Lao Cai. This was to be completed within a few days. From this springboard, more assaults would be launched depending on the situation.

2. Destruction of Vietnamese military forces and weakening of Vietnam's national defence capacity by "making a clean sweep" of the border guards, annihilating a major part of the regional troops, and mauling some of the regular units.

3. Destruction of Vietnamese economic bases as the Chinese troops advanced, with a view to weakening our economy and wrecking socialist construction in Vietnam.

Right at the outset the Chinese expansionists fielded 200,000 regular troops from five army corps and a number of independent divisions. By the time the campaign fizzled out, the Chinese invading army had increased to 600,000 and included 44 divisions from 11 army corps stationed in 5 major military zones: Canton (and the whole of Kwangtung), Kunming (and the whole of Yunnan), Chengtu (and the whole

of Szechuan), Wuhan, and Peking. These were accompanied by tens of thousands of militiamen for support and plunder. Their war equipment included 550 tanks and armoured cars, 480 heavy guns and 1,260 mortars, not to mention aircraft and naval vessels. The Chinese invaders thus deployed more troops on a limited theatre of operations than the Americans had done for the whole of southern Vietnam at the peak of their involvement — 540,000 GIs — and four times more than the former French expeditionary corps — 146,000 troops. Thus the operation was a large-scale military invasion, not a “border incident” as Peking had tried to argue.

In the early hours of 17 February 1979, the Chinese high command ordered simultaneous surprise assaults all along the frontier with Vietnam. The frontal attacks were combined with thrusts by montagnard divisions through mountain and forest tracks. These divisions were composed of elements of the Hoa population living along the border who had left for China last year at the time of the notorious “victimized Chinese residents” campaign. They are familiar with the terrain and speak Vietnamese.

But the dreams of the invaders failed to materialize.

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As soon as they set foot on Vietnamese soil, the aggressors met with vigorous resistance

and riposte in all the six border provinces from Pa Nam Cum (Lai Chau) to Po Hen (Quang Ninh). All Chinese spearheads ran into an iron wall made up of Vietnamese regional troops and the local populations of national minorities, who set up a battle array of people's war. Knowing every nook and cranny of the land, the Vietnamese fighters were armed with iron resolve and good weapons, including relatively modern ones in the case of the regional troops. Many of them had participated in the wars of resistance against French and American imperialist aggressions. The favourable terrain, their excellent equipment and their long-standing experience, combined with their courage, patriotism and hatred of the invaders increased their fighting ability severalfold. At every step the aggressors met death, either from modern or rudimentary weapons. In one single barrage at Ban Phiet and Ban Quan (Hoang Lien Son province) on the afternoon of 12 March, an artillery unit killed more than 1,100 Chinese troops and destroyed 104 military vehicles and nine 122-mm guns. Corporal Tran Manh Hung of Company 3, Thanh Xuyen Detachment (Armed Security Forces) was assigned the task of checking the enemy advance on the hillside of Height V, with a medium-size machine-gun. While he was loading his machine-gun, Chinese troops, using their "human sea" tactic, attempted to overpower him. Hung grabbed an AK sub-machinegun lying near the wall of the trench and fired several bursts at the enemy. At the same time, spotting a Chinese commander shouting orders from behind a tree, Hung

jumped onto a nearby defence work and shot him dead with a CKC rifle. The enemy made another assault. Hung grabbed two hand grenades and threw them at the advancing troops. Using various kinds of weapons and moving about, Hung managed to beat off all the enemy assaults, although he was wounded three times. Every logging-camp, State farm, factory, office, town quarter, village or hamlet was turned into a fortress. The border police post at Pa Nam Cum (Phong Tho district, Lai Chau province), which lies close to the frontier, was cut off and encircled on the very first day of the Chinese attack. But its small garrison firmly held its ground, putting 100 Chinese troops out of action and knocking out three tanks. A militia squad of Hoanh Mo, a section of the Binh Lieu logging-camp in Quang Ninh province, composed of six teen-ager members, held its ground on a hill against repeated assaults by enemy forces which outnumbered it 100 to 1 and were supported by artillery, for the whole day of 1st March, eventually inflicting more than 100 casualties on the attackers. The self-defence unit of Tan An district (Cao Bang province) consists of 26 fighters, including 7 women. They are from various nationalities: Vietnamese, Tay, Nung, Hoa, and are from 17 to 40 years of age. They practise different trades: worker, tailor, artisan and creche attendant. For five days running they had to fight an enemy force greater than one regiment supported by artillery fire. But they succeeded in beating off all the enemy's 26 assaults. As a result, 300 enemy troops were annihilated,

two taken prisoner and large amounts of weapons and ammunition captured. In the town of Lao Cai, the self-defence platoon of Duyen Hai quarter, not quite 30 strong, fought in such superb coordination with a unit of regional troops that they knocked out 4 Chinese tanks and put out of action more than 300 attackers. Among the platoon members were Tran Nghien, the Party secretary and political commissar, and three of his sons, the two youngest aged 15 and 16 respectively. The father-and-sons team was credited with nearly 100 enemy casualties.

This battle array of people's war was made up of a thick network of mutually-supporting blocking positions, which were manned either by a single man or a more or less important unit. Our forces were able to move from one position to another, either for defence or attack. Deep thrusts were launched by independent units into the enemy's rear to destroy command headquarters or key bases, as well as combined operations by units belonging to various services. Thus, company commander Nguyen Cao Thuong (Lang Son provincial troops) led his unit in a daring operation which destroyed nearly a whole enemy company. The militia units of Ngoc Khe and Dinh Phong communes (Trung Khanh district, Cao Bang province) in a combined operation with regional troops put out of action nearly a whole enemy battalion. Cases were by no means rare in which a single Vietnamese fighter, making clever use of terrain and defence works, repelled assaults by hundreds of Chinese troops, inflicting heavy

casualties on them. Trang A Lung, a member of the Pa Di minority, single-handedly defended a position at Xin Ngai Cho (Muong Khuong district, Hoang Lien Son province) for two days, killing and wounding 150 enemy troops. Nguyen Cong Hoan, a member of the Lang Son provincial forces, fired his heavy machine-gun so effectively from a hill located 700 metres from the border that he stopped a whole Chinese battalion from noon to 17.00 hours on 17 February, inflicting heavy losses on the attackers.

The local populations, made up of people of many national minorities, used every weapon available and devised skilful tactics to fight the invaders. Cao Van Hac, 55, of Lao Cai town, volunteered to join a detachment manning a blocking position. He was credited with three attackers killed in the very first engagement, which was fought on 18 February. Vu Van Thai, a guerilla of Hai Ninh (formerly Mong Cai) lived barely a few dozen yards from a border marker. The day the Chinese attack started, he and his son Huong calmly waited for the enemy, gun in hand. Their position was so well camouflaged that they were able to fire point-blank on an assault detachment, killing five. Dam Thi Phan, a young woman of Be Treu commune, Hoa An district, Cao Bang province, ran straight for a spiked trap when she was pursued by three Chinese soldiers. She manœuvred the soldier in the lead into the trap, snatched his gun from him and shot the second pursuer, forcing the third to **surrender**.

Even children joined in the resistance. Dam Van Duc, 14, of Hoang Tung commune, Hoa An district, Cao Bang province, blew up a Chinese tank and put 50 soldiers out of action in engagements fought on 17 and 18 February. Five young students of the secondary school in Lao Cai refused to evacuate the town with their families and organized themselves into an armed resistance squad. The above are but a few instances quoted at random.

The Chinese attackers paid a heavy price for "human sea" tactics. In the very first week of their campaign, they suffered 16,000 casualties. By 28 February, this number had increased to 27,000; by 5 March to 45,000; and by 18 March to 62,500.

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The invaders found themselves bogged down and encircled. The people's war fought by the Vietnamese side, in which only local forces were used, effectively stopped all Chinese assaults and broke all their spearheads. By the time the Peking rulers proclaimed their intention to withdraw their troops 17 days after they had crossed the border with Vietnam, the only town they could boast of occupying was Lao Cai, just across a small river from Chinese territory. Apart from this paltry achievement, they had only been able to penetrate into and plunder a few localities and civilian economic establishments. All their

columns had been stopped, and their positions were interlocked with Vietnamese positions in rugged terrain. In regions which the Chinese had made their main targets — Lao Cai, Cao Bang, Lang Son — Vietnamese local forces remained in control of key points close to the border and operated behind their lines, cutting off their supplies and communications.

By launching no fewer than 25 thrusts along the whole length of the Vietnam-China border, combined with numerous feints, the invaders had hoped to confuse us. Our command, so they thought, would concentrate our forces, and especially our elite troops, on the wrong points. And so they would be able to “explode the myth of the invincibility of the Vietnamese army”. The Vietnamese side might also be led into an incorrect assesement of the Chinese strategic designs and subsequent actions. But it was the Chinese apple-cart that was upset. As the Chinese campaign ended in a flop, the Vietnamese Command remained in full possession of its trump cards, which it would use when and where it saw fit. The review *Révolution africaine* of 27 Feb.-7 March, 1979, wrote: “The Vietnamese have only fielded regional and militia forces, and yet all observers can see what redoubtable adversaries they are for the Chinese regulars. This is a serious headache for the Chinese command. It seems that the “lesson” China wishes to “teach Viet-

nam" consists in seeking to maul the seasoned troops that once defeated the Americans [...] but those troops have not yet gone into action."

On the other hand, in the space of only one month, the Chinese forces have been literally decimated: one-tenth of the troops put out of action, 280 tanks and armoured cars destroyed together with a large number of artillery pieces and heavy mortars, not to mention large quantities of other war equipment and many prisoners captured by the Vietnamese.

To sum up, the Chinese invaders have suffered a fundamental failure: they have failed to achieve their targets, except the massacre of civilians and the plunder of Vietnamese property. They have, moreover, suffered heavy losses. So, this can be said to be a twofold failure. They found themselves in a quandary about what to do next. Were they to cling to the few positions they had occupied? In this case they would face the prospect of prolonged fighting and the ensuing problems: troop morale, supplies, condemnation by public opinion at home and abroad, etc. Besides, they would face resolute counter-attacks by a strong opponent. Were they then to forge ahead, deeper into Vietnamese territory? This would pose the problem of costs and consequences. The Vietnamese forces would certainly exploit their increasing weaknesses and annihilate them in the end.

This dilemma lay at the root of the Chinese withdrawal.

The Peking aggressors had picked the wrong target for their invasion. They had overestimated the importance of their numerical superiority and other factors which they had deemed favourable to them.

Numbers are important in armed struggle, but they are not the most important factor. A bloated army of poor fighting quality and poor morale is easy prey to an experienced, resolute and well-equipped, even though smaller, adversary. What happened to the Chinese army of invasion in Vietnam is proof of this.

True, there had once existed in China a revolutionary army which had fought a protracted resistance war against the Japanese fascists and a liberation war against the Chiang Kai-shek clique, agents of the US imperialists. Chinese volunteers had once fought "against US imperialism, in support of Korea". Those forces were inspired by noble motives and so were imbued with a high fighting spirit. But all these fine traditions have not been preserved. Many political tempests have blown across China since the 1960's causing many transmutations in what had once been a liberation army. Today this army has become the tool of the reactionary authorities in Peking. By waging an unjust war against the Vietnamese people, it has demonstrated the profound change in its very nature. It now bears the warlike character of imperialist aggressive forces, and behaves with the savage cruelty of traitors. It is driven by hegemonist ambitions, great-nation chauvinism, and hatred of other nations. It also smacks of the rapacity of a horde of pirates. It can kill, burn,

destroy, but never will it of its own accord endure sacrifices for the sake of the evil schemes of the present leaders in China. On the battlefield, to make it advance its commanders have to whip it up into a frenzy with gong beatings and bugle calls, or threaten it with their pistols. The contradictions and lies that fill ideological work among its members lead to utter confusion in their minds, the more so since they are 50% illiterate. Low morale spawns superstitious practices. On the Chinese troops killed or taken prisoner have been found amulets which the wearers hoped would protect them against misfortune in battle. Such is the abysmal depth to which a once revolutionary army has sunk!

The Chinese army has betrayed its weaknesses in yet another respect. Its weaponry and war equipment are mediocre for China has barely embarked on its "modernization" programme. There are glaring defects in technique and tactic as well as in organization and logistics. Combined operations against Vietnamese defences have been faulty. Tank and armoured car losses have reached unprecedented proportions (280 vehicles destroyed out of 550 fielded); instances were not rare when Chinese artillery barrages struck their own infantry; and too many Chinese gun emplacements have been destroyed in counter-barrages. This has been due not so much to terrain as to lack of experience — for this is the first major Chinese military campaign since the Sino-Indian war of 1962 — and to inadequate training in modern warfare. Such an army cannot have a very

great fighting power even when loaded with weaponry. The main thrusts of the Chinese invasion could advance no more than one kilometre a day on an average, and this when they were only facing Vietnamese regional forces and border guards besides civilian self-defence units. This is ample evidence that the Chinese regular forces have little punch, little mobility, and poor logistical support.

Large numbers and poor fighting quality lead to severe losses. Although these have not yet reached unbearable levels, they herald the disastrous price the Peking rulers would have to pay, especially in the military field, for any intensification and widening of the war.

The Chinese army of aggression proved to be greatly inferior to the American, puppet and satellite forces formerly fighting in southern Vietnam in many respects: numbers, weaponry, war equipment, organization, experience and overall war potential. On the other hand, the people's armed forces of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam — militia, regionals, and regulars — have grown by leaps and bounds since the victorious resistance to American aggression. Could there be any doubt as to the outcome of the Chinese military adventure?

When they decided on a war of aggression against Vietnam, the Peking rulers doubtless expected strong reaction from world public opinion. But they were confident that by combining American and Japanese support with

their own deceitful manoeuvres they would be able to put progressive mankind before a *fait accompli*.

As soon as their troops crossed into Vietnam, they blared out lies to the effect that "this is but an operation limited in both time and space" and that "the Chinese troops will not penetrate deep into Vietnamese territory", etc. This mendacious propaganda aimed at covering up the large-scale Chinese campaign, lulling world public opinion, and preparing for more war schemes.

What happened, however, ran counter to their expectations.

In the very first hours of the war, the world resounded with angry cries: "Hands off Vietnam!", "China must put an immediate end to its war of aggression against Vietnam!", "Withdraw the Chinese troops from Vietnam!", etc. Once again, Vietnam ranked first in the world's preoccupations. Indeed, world reaction was even quicker and broader than at the time of the introduction of American expeditionary troops into southern Vietnam and air bombing of northern Vietnam.

When they laid hands on Vietnam, the Peking rulers immediately ran into the militant solidarity of the genuine socialist countries. The Soviet Union, the bulwark of world peace and revolution, asserted that it would fulfil its internationalist obligation to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The brother socialist countries stood ready to defend Vietnam at all costs and extended to it effective help in all fields.

By invading Vietnam, the Peking rulers exposed their true colours as a brutal and reactionary clique, the tool of imperialism and a most truculent and vile counter-revolutionary force. This clique has dropped its "revolutionary", "Marxist" mask. It has insulted and trampled underfoot all legal principles concerning the peoples' national sovereignty and independence. It is a serious challenge to peace and stability in Southeast Asia and the world. In the views of many press publications in various countries, the Chinese invasion of Vietnam resembles Hitler's invasions of Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1939. If left unchecked, it could lead to a third world war. That is why the communist and workers' parties, many freedom-and justice-loving governments, democratic international organizations and progressive people throughout the world have immediately sided with Vietnam and engaged in resolute actions in defence of our country as well as severely condemned the criminal actions of the Deng Xiao-ping clique. In the Third World — of which China considers itself a member — many public figures have unreservedly condemned China for siding with the imperialists. An African leader warned that failing a quick Chinese withdrawal from Vietnam he would convene a conference of progressive and revolutionary Heads of State of the Third World to denounce the warlike and expansionist policy of China. Even in the capitalist countries, opposition to China has spread to government circles. The Canadian defence minister called on his government and other Western countries

not to sell arms to China. In many capitals of the world, the Chinese embassies became the targets of public indignation and their staffs did not dare to appear in public for many days.

The climax of international solidarity with Vietnam came with the holding of an Emergency International Conference of Support to Vietnam. The initiative for this conference came simultaneously from many capitals and political, social and religious circles. Within a week the Conference was able to open — a record-breaking preparation time. More than 400 delegates from over 100 countries came to Helsinki, the capital of Finland, to express the views and feelings of thousands of millions of people on our planet towards the aggressor and the victim of aggression. A total of 143 delegates took the floor and were unanimous in their indictment of the expansionist and chauvinist clique in Peking.

Under the pressure of this worldwide wave of opinion, the imperialist and reactionary ranks fell into disarray. The American and Japanese imperialists, who had extended their support to Peking and pinned quite a few hopes on its military adventure, now avoided committing themselves when they saw their protégé being bogged down in a quagmire and cowering under the whip of public opinion throughout the world.

The Peking rulers' war of aggression against Vietnam has also had an impact on the situation in China itself and among the members of this warlike clique. The Chinese people have

seen through their lies and deceptions. Their conscience has been awakened. A democratic anti-war movement has surged up in many forms: wall-posters, leaflets, demonstrations, rallies... — and threatens to go even further. A document urged "sending Deng Xiao-ping to the King of Demons".

The Peking rulers' military adventure has proved costly to them in other ways. Barely five days after it started, they had to "suspend" contracts worth two billion US dollars with Japanese firms on the import of machinery and plants. Limits have had to be set to their "modernization" ambitions, in addition to a review of their military plans. More acute conflicts will develop within this reactionary gang, whose members are already at loggerheads, nay, at daggers drawn, with each other.

So, this first round has ended in shameful failure for the Peking rulers. They have, however, not given up their expansionist designs. They are preparing for new adventures. They still cling to a number of points on Vietnamese territory and brazenly proclaim "their right to hit back and punish" us. They threaten the security of Laos and continue their encouragement and assistance to the remnants of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary forces in Kampuchea.

In spite of our resounding victory we will not lower our guard for we have seen through the evil designs of this dangerous enemy. So long as the reactionary clique in power in Peking pursue their great-power expansionism they will not give up their dream of conquering our country. They continue to threaten to

attack Vietnam. We Vietnamese people must continue to struggle against their aggressive and expansionist schemes, but we will defeat them. We have the necessary fighting will, experience, and organization, and our forces are in battle array. We benefit from the great and effective support and assistance of the Soviet Union and the other genuine socialist countries, and the encouragement and support of the whole of progressive mankind. History entrusted our people with the task of defeating French old-style colonialism and American neo-colonialism. Today, the Vietnamese people are entrusted with the task of smashing the warlike expansionism of the reactionary clique in Peking.

The Vietnamese people will remain worthy of the trust of the world's peoples.

24 March 1979

NGUYEN HUU THUY

THE UNFOLDING OF HOSTILITIES

(from 17 February to 18 March 1979)

Characteristics of the Vietnam-China border

Although similar hill and forest areas lie on either side of the frontier, the border line is well-defined thanks to a system of marker posts set up in the late 19th century following an agreement signed between the French colonial administration and the Qing Court in Peking, and was recognized by the Vietnam Workers' Party and Chinese Communist Party in 1955. This 1600 km-long frontier line crosses mountainous areas in which high mountain peaks alternate with lower hills, the average altitude decreasing gradually from west to east.

In spite of the rugged terrain, there exist many passes through the hills and mountains in a north-south direction. Two of these in particular, the valley of the Red River, which rises in southwestern China to enter Vietnam at the frontier town of Lao Cai, and the Dong Dang-Lang Son artery which is followed by the railway and highway (National Highway One) linking Hanoi to Peking going through to all the other socialist countries, constitute historical routes of invasion. The Cao Bang region

is also a crossroads of land and water communication lines, and the Chinese feudal dynasties often sought to annex it. Six Vietnamese provinces adjoin the frontier: from west to east Lai Chau (Capital Lai Chau), Hoang Lien Son (capital Lao Cai), Ha Tuyen (capital Ha Giang), Cao Bang (capital Cao Bang), Lang Son (capital Lang Son) and Quang Ninh (capital Hon Gay). Quang Ninh is a coastal province well known for the Ha Long Bay and its coal mines. The coastal town of Mong Cai lies just on the border.

In these six frontier provinces there live many ethnic groups — Tay, Nung, Zao and Meo, to mention only the most important — as well as a large Hoa population (people of Chinese origin).

On both sides of the frontier live people of the same ethnic origin, trading at the same markets and bound by family ties. But a Meo, Tay, Nung or Hoa is a Vietnamese citizen when he lives south of the border line, whereas his cousin who lives on the other side of the line holds Chinese citizenship.

Throughout 1978 a large number of Peking agents were agitating among these ethnic minorities, especially the Hoa community, urging them to leave for China. Thus 170,000 Hoa people crossed the frontier into China. Now, in the Chinese war of aggression, they — or at least the able-bodied among them — served as guides for the Chinese troops or formed "montagnard" units, which made commando

raids on Vietnamese positions, passing along mountain tracks to launch surprise attacks on the rear of the Vietnamese forces.

On the Lang Son front

Large detachments of enemy forces attacked Ban Chat (Dinh Lap), Chi Ma and Ba Son (Loc Binh), Tan Thanh and Tan Yen (Van Lang) and the district town of Dong Dang from many directions.

All the enemy thrusts were intercepted and pinned down by the local armed forces for three successive days west of Highways IA and IB. On 20 February the Chinese aggressors sent more reinforcements and started a new wave of attacks on the heights in an attempt to push forward south of Dong Dang. The army and people of Lang Son stubbornly held the ground, strongly beat off all enemy frontal assaults, and at the same time attacked the enemy from behind to the east and north-east of Loc Binh and Dinh Lap districts, forcing them to retreat in many places. Our forces still managed to hold out at the convergence of Highways IA and IB.

After ten days of fighting the Chinese forces suffered heavy losses but failed to achieve the objectives of the offensive. On 27 February the Chinese command fielded another army corps in an attempt to capture the provincial town of Lang Son. Fierce fighting was going on between two strengthened enemy army corps approaching from Dong Dang, Cao Loc and Loc Binh and our regional armed forces who

tried to check the enemy's advance in the Lang Son town area and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Thousands of enemy corpses were scattered along Highway 1A, as a result of the tug-of-war-like fighting on Hills 417, 608, 800 556, 568 and 473. In particular, in the Khanh Khe bridge area along Highway 18, soldiers of Tay Son detachment managed to stop the advance of a Chinese division and tank battalion. For 30 days running they succeeded in maintaining their defence line, killing 600 enemy troops, badly damaging one enemy regiment and three enemy battalions, destroying 42 enemy tanks and armoured cars, and capturing hundreds of weapons of various kinds.

Having sustained heavy losses (many units wiped out or badly damaged) the enemy troops had to withdraw. On their retreat, the aggressors continued to burn houses, plunder properties and kill our compatriots, most of whom were old people and children. Our regional armed forces gave the enemy due punishment at Dong Dang, Loc Binh and Chi Ma, killing several thousand more enemy troops. In the Long Dau-Na Quan (Chi Ma) area, the armed forces and population of Lang Son badly hit an enemy infantry regiment and three enemy artillery companies.

Thus, on the Lang Son front, from 17 February to 18 March 1979, the armed forces and population wiped out nearly 19,000 Chinese aggressors, wiped out or badly damaged 3 regiments and 4 battalions, set on fire or destroyed 128 military vehicles, including 76 tanks

and armoured cars ; destroyed 95 guns, mortars and missile launching-pads ; and captured hundreds of weapons and a large amount of military equipment.

On the Cao Bang front

Two strengthened enemy army corps advanced towards the provincial town of Cao Bang from two directions : the first large detachment came from the northwest along Thong Nong, and the second from the northeast through Thach An and Quang Hoa. These two detachments were to meet at Cao Bang town.

But both enemy detachments were fiercely intercepted by the Cao Bang regional armed forces and population. The north-western thrust which relied on tanks was intercepted at Hoa An. The north-eastern thrust was also fiercely beaten off at Thach An and Quy Thuan (Quang Hoa) and was stopped on Highway No. 4. The enemy attack on Trung Khanh was beaten off by the district militia and local forces at marker post No. 62 and one enemy battalion was almost completely wiped out at Chong Mu hill. Two enemy divisions attacking Tra Linh-Phuc Hoa in an attempt to capture Ma Phuc Pass and Khau Chia Pass were counter-attacked by regional armed forces and cut off. They had to flee back to the border, leaving behind hundreds of corpses and weapons.

After only three days of fighting the Chinese aggressors had suffered heavy losses in Cao Bang : 4 battalions were badly damaged and

scores of tanks and armoured cars destroyed. They were thus compelled to send reserve forces into battle.

In the face of massive enemy forces the inhabitants and armed forces of Cao Bang showed great courage and calm. While beating off the enemy frontal assault, they moved a force to attack the enemy from behind. Acting skilfully and courageously our local units cut off enemy forces on Highways nos. 3 and 4, destroyed hundreds of tanks and armoured cars, strongly attacked the flanks of the enemy and wiped out thousands of enemy troops. On this defensive front, our fighters managed to contain a whole enemy division for 12 days running and wiped out more than 4,000 enemy troops at Khau Chia Pass. The units entrenched at the Tai Ho Xin bridge and Khau Don crossroads defeated one after another many assaults by the enemy who finally had to retreat on 12 March. However, as the retreating aggressors continued to commit many crimes against our people, the Cao Bang population and armed forces retaliated by inflicting them many losses at Tai Ho Xin, Na Bao, Khau Don and Khau Lieu (over 1,000 enemy troops wiped out and many military vehicles destroyed).

During 30 days of fighting Cao Bang wiped out more than 18,000 enemy troops, wiped out or badly mauled 7 battalions, set on fire or destroyed 134 tanks and armoured cars and 23 military vehicles.

On the Hoang Lien Son front

In the early hours of 17 February first-line divisions of the two Chinese army corps launched massive attacks along the entire length of the Hoang Lien Son border, from the northwest to the northeast of Lao Cai town, and aimed towards Bat Xat and Muong Khuong districts. While their artillery pounded the town, their tanks and infantry troops crossed the Red River and the Nam Thi River across pontoons and advanced towards Lao Cai town and the Ban Phiet area.

Our artillery responded with great accuracy to destroy enemy pontoons. No sooner had the enemy forces set foot on our land than they were beaten off by militia, self-defence and army units from Bat Xat and Muong Khuong districts. Enemy tanks were destroyed at the entrance of the town, and enemy artillery emplacements across the border were hit. Quang Kim, Duyen Hai street, Ban Phiet crossroads, milestone No. 4, Coc Xan hill area, Ban Son and Ban Lau were the scenes of fierce fighting. During the first days of the war Hoang Lien Son troops wiped out thousands of aggressors and set on fire or destroyed scores of tanks and armoured cars.

Up to 24 February, the enemy had thrown into battle the full strength of two army corps. The armed forces and population of Hoang Lien Son continued to intercept the enemy by laying ambushes and making ground and artillery attacks, wiping out thousands of enemy troops along Highway 7 from Ban Phiet to Coc Xan.

on the railway line from Pho Moi to Pho Lu, and on the portions of road from Lao Cai to Cam Duong and from Lao Cai to Sa Pa. Retreating enemy troops continued to commit barbarous crimes against our people. The Hoang Lien Son armed forces dealt them a massive blow at Ban Phiet, wiping out over 1,100 enemy troops and destroying 104 military vehicles and 9 guns.

Up to 18 March 1979, over 11,500 enemy troops were wiped out, 4 battalions badly damaged and 255 military vehicles (including 66 tanks and armoured cars) destroyed in Hoang Lien Son province.

On the Lai Chau, Ha Tuyen and Quang Ninh fronts

The enemy launched simultaneous attacks at many places in the border districts.

In Lai Chau, two Chinese divisions made a thrust on Nam Cum-Phong Tho along Highway 10. All the way from northwest to south west of Phong Tho they were intercepted by the regional armed forces. Thousands of them were wiped out at Mo-Xi-Cau, Nam Cay and Pa Tan and their missile emplacement at Huoi Luong was destroyed. After more than 20 days of fighting, the armed forces and population of Lai Chau managed to check the enemy at Phong Tho and hold out at the Pa Tan crossroads.

In Ha Tuyen, all attacks by a Chinese division against our border stations were fought back by our armed security forces, the militia and

army units of Dong Van, Thanh Thuy and Meo Vac districts, who combined efforts with the local population of various nationalities to wipe out more than 1,000 enemy troops.

In Quang Ninh, two enemy infantry divisions attacked Than Phun and Po Hen in Mong Cai district and Cao Ba Lanh in Binh Lieu district. From the outset the Quang Ninh armed forces put up stubborn resistance. On 19 and 20 February our fighters repulsed two enemy regiments in this area, wiped out more than 700 enemy troops, and the remnants of the enemy forces had to flee to the border line, leaving behind more than 100 corpses and a large amount of weapons and ammunition. In the following days, every attack by the enemy on our positions stretching from the Doan Tinh area and the Luc Lam crossroads near Mong Cai town to the heights in the Hoanh Mo, Cao Ba Lanh and Dong Van areas, was beaten off by the local army and population who wiped out thousands of enemy troops, hotly pursued and drove out the remnants from our territory.

All told, the armed forces and population of Lai Chau, Ha Tuyen and Quang Ninh provinces wiped out 14,000 enemy troops, put out of action 3 enemy battalions and set on fire or destroyed 10 military vehicles, including 4 tanks and armoured cars.

After 30 days of fighting (from 17 February to 18 March 1979), the local armed forces and people of various nationalities in the six northern border provinces have fiercely fought back the 600,000-strong Chinese invading army with

its many army corps and divisions with artillery and armour support. We have scored a glorious victory on the front line, and thwarted the enemy's sinister strategic intentions. We have put out of action 62,500 enemy troops (more than one-tenth of the troops mobilized); wiped out and badly damaged 3 regiments and 18 battalions, destroyed 550 military vehicles, including 280 tanks and armoured cars (more than half the number engaged), destroyed 115 heavy guns and mortars; seized large quantities of arms, ammunition and equipment; and captured many invaders.

Having sustained heavy setbacks in the military as well as political and diplomatic fields, the Chinese reactionary rulers were compelled to withdraw their army of aggression. But they have not yet renounced their schemes of great-power expansionism and hegemony. Therefore, our armed forces and people throughout the country should continue always to be vigilant and stand ready to defend our Fatherland — the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

WAS THIS PEKING'S LESSON ?

The rulers in Peking told the world that they wanted to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson".

When their troops invaded Vietnam, they behaved both as aggressors, indulging in wanton destruction and inhuman atrocities, and as pirates, plundering machinery, farm implements, food, and even roofing materials, bricks, household utensils, articles of clothing and so on.

Pending publication of a comprehensive dossier on their crimes, we give here a few facts about the barbarities committed by the troops sent into Vietnam by Peking, by the same people who instructed the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique of murders in Kampuchea.

At Duc Chinh village

Two charnel-houses filled with corpses of Vietnamese villagers have been discovered at a place 6km from the town of Cao Bang, from which troops withdrew on 15 March. Both of them are located in the small village of Duc Chinh, Vinh Quang commune, which has been burned down by the Chinese and where there used to be a pig-rearing co-operative.

A small group of journalists, among them the AFP special correspondent, have seen 38 corpses in a shallow well. They are swollen, but apparently not mutilated, and are piled on top of one another. The first ones observed are those of two young children. They had been covered

with straw to hide them from the view of Vietnamese troops and villagers returning to their villages and hamlets.

The victims have been identified thanks to their clothes, found near the well. These clothes had been piled into a heap and burned, but had only been partially destroyed.

The dead bodies are those of 20 workers, among them 19 women and 18 children from 8 months to 13 years old. The naked corpses of three other women have been found tied to trees. They had been shot with Chinese 'AK 47' assault rifles, and empty cartridge shells have been found in the grass. Of the 19 women seven were pregnant, according to their near relations, now back in the village, and five others were mothers.

Not far from the well one can see corpses covered with sand mud; they have been found in a river which supplies the region with water. The exact number of victims is still unknown Saturday (24 March, *Ed.*)

Doctor Hoang Kim, who refrains from speaking about the political aspect of the discoveries, says, "It is not fortuitous that the Chinese have thrown corpses into rivers. It is a deliberate attempt at pollution, which may cause epidemics." He works at the Institute of Epidemiology and Hygiene and is helping in the conduct of disinfecting operations in the province of Cao Bang.

Provincial and public health authorities say that other charnel-houses have been discovered in the province. Cross checking shows that those

massacres of civilians had been perpetrated by the Chinese a short time before they started to withdraw. Most of the victims were women and children, as men were away in the army or the militia.

According to the authorities, one hundred people have been found shot and tied to trees, at a place in the province which has not been visited by the journalists.

As for the victims found in the well at Duc Chinh, they were killed with bullets and bamboo sticks. One of the sticks, stained with blood, has been found in a patch of meadow where red stains, still visible, point to a massacre.

J. THOROVAL

AFP, 25 March 1979

My Cao commune (Lang Son province)

My Cao commune is situated north of the town of Lang Son, the provincial capital, close to the town of Dong Dang and seven kilometres from the Chinese border. It comprises 12 villages and is known for the high quality of its agricultural produce: rice, maize, tobacco, and fruit.

In the early hours of 17 February 1979, thousands of Chinese artillery shells suddenly began to rain down on the commune. As soon as the bombardment stopped, Chinese soldiers rushed into the villages, followed by Chinese civilian carriers with ox-carts and hand-carts. Few of

the My Cao population had managed to escape. Trapped in their hamlets, they would become the victims of the most inhuman cruelties.

In Ta Lay village, the first person the Chinese soldiers came across was old Trieu Tien Hung. They shot him, ripped his belly apart, and strung out his intestines along the path. Hoang Van Diu, a 9th year student at the Dong Dang 3rd-level secondary school, was stabbed to death in his own backyard. Trieu Viet Bao, Trieu Viet Sang and Trieu Viet Choc, who had taken refuge in the air-raid shelter in their garden, were killed with bursts of gunfire. 70-year-old Hoang Hong was stripped naked and disembowelled. Ngo Viet Bao who was an eyewitness, gave this account: "I managed to escape into the forest... I was running past some village and I saw Chinese soldiers massacring and plundering. In Na Lang, I saw the dead body of a woman who had been raped. In Ta Lay, they threw their victims' corpses into air-raid shelters and incinerated them using flame-throwers."

Quan Doi Nhan Dan (People's
Army Daily) 5 March 1979

What happened to the towns they penetrated into

A complex for processing the mineral apatite made virtually unusable and its stocks destroyed, a brickworks flattened, a pharmaceutical plant

destroyed, a pineapple-canning factory plundered: such is the visible damage in Lao Cai and the surrounding areas after the departure of the Chinese.

Dozens of public buildings, houses, hospitals and dispensaries were wrecked, plundered or set on fire by the departing Chinese troops.

Foreign correspondents have been able to assess the destruction wrought on the region. The main street of Pho Lu, 35 kilometres from the Chinese frontier, is nothing but a heap of debris and ashes.

Elsewhere, food stocks, rice and maize in particular, have disappeared. Near Cam Duong what remains of a depot of 127 tons of paddy is still burning.

J. THOROVAL
AFP, 16 March 1979

A large area of the town of Lang Son, where I am writing this, has been razed to the ground. Even after so many years of war, Vietnamese towns destroyed are still an unbearable sight.

Hundreds of houses will have to be rebuilt. Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of Vietnamese people have been made homeless. Some buildings have been razed to the ground. The town hospital is just a heap of rubble. Here and there I can see broken glass, smashed tables and scattered medicines, thrown to the ground by the shock of shell fire. The medical secondary school across the street has also suffered much damage.

Entering a room of one of the students, I see that the roof has been knocked in and the floor is covered with dust and stones. A calendar on the wall shows 17 February 1979, the first day of the aggression.

The tragedy this implies is evident. The Chinese have, alas, adopted the terrorism of the Americans, bombing and destroying everything, to force their enemy to submit.

ALAIN RUSCIO

Special correspondent of *l'Humanité*

10 March 1979

The beautiful town of Cao Bang lying on the Hien and Bang rivers no longer exists. The bridges crossing the rivers have been blown up by the aggressors. Smoke still rises from the scenes of destruction.

The polyclinic, the province's largest medical establishment, is nothing but a heap of rubble. The two-storey building housing the "First of June" kindergarten has been blown up. Nothing remains of the children's toys. The first-and second-level school built with UNICEF help has been knocked down: only twisted steel girders can be seen. The town pagoda and church have also been blown up. The engineering plant, the agricultural mechanization enterprise, and the cold-storage depot have been completely destroyed. In the outskirts hundreds of hectares of tobacco plants have been wrecked by fire and

explosives, as have been the tobacco processing works.

Some of the survivors who had been unable to escape told us that the Chinese troops had taken away lorry-loads of plundered items: clothes, blankets, mosquito-nets, household utensils, porcelain, roofing materials, furniture, even tiles torn up from the floors. Before retreating, they destroyed everything they had not had time to take away. The result is that practically nothing remains inside people's houses.

Vu Ngoc Thuoc, 82, and his wife Bach Thi Thai, 75, living at 245 Pho Cu street recounted how the Chinese troops used rifle-butts and sledge-hammers to knock down doors and storm into civilians' houses. After robbing the old couple of all their possessions — radio set, clock, clothes, blankets, down to their stock of wheat flour and a jar of cooking fat — the soldiers threatened them with bayonets shouting "Watch out or we'll come back and cut your throats!"

Many of those unable to flee were killed on the spot. The Chinese slaughtered pigs, cattle and poultry and scattered their remains all over the place. Before leaving, they planted mines and grenades in the streets, in doorways and even in food bins.

VAN THANH and **VAN LICH**
Vietnam News Agency reporters
Nhan Dan, 19 March 1979

The town of Sa Pa, a mountain resort, has been totally disfigured. Peach and plum orchards have been reduced to charred stumps with flame-throwers. The war memorial, dedicated to heroes of the anti-French and anti-American wars of resistance, has been knocked down. The market has been burned down. The main bookshop has been ravaged, its stock of more than 20,000 books on literature, art, science, education, etc., burnt, torn up or trampled. The second- and third-level schools have been set on fire and smoke is still rising from the ashes.

From the hospital built with Polish aid Chinese soldiers have taken away a great deal of equipment and destroyed the files and research documents. Villas and rest homes were plundered and the furniture taken away. Mines were planted in every corner of the buildings. The church has suffered great damage — there are bullet holes in the walls and in the statue of the Virgin Mary. The geophysical research station has been stripped of all its equipment. Even plantations of pine trees have been reduced by deliberate fires to charred stumps.

NGUYEN VAN NHA

Vietnam News Agency reporter
Nhan Dan, 17 March 1979

The apatite mine of Lao Cai

The crushing plant, the ore-enriching plant, the calcium carbide plant, etc., had all been destroyed. Everywhere we saw heaps of debris

and twisted girders. All the buildings had been blown up with explosives.

The big storage structures were all distorted. The Coc Da railway station, where the ore used to be loaded for shipment, was a pile of broken bricks and girders. The Lang Pen station, a few kilometres away, was in the same state. The 12 metre bridge spanning the Coc river had been knocked down.

Everything that could be dismantled had been removed: machines and parts, tyres, tin sheeting, steel girders, even nuts and bolts. Wrapping paper and plastic bags for phosphates waiting to be packed were torn up and made unusable. Even the protective metal covers for the excavators had been plundered.

The Chinese aggressors are well aware that our agriculture is in bad need of phosphate fertilizers. That is why they made special efforts to wreck our apatite mine.

VIET AN

Quan Doi Nhan Dan

19 March 1979

The prison at Ping Xiang (China)

Here is the story told by Au Viet Phan, of Bao Lam commune, Van Lang district, Lang Son province:

"I spent the night of 16 February as usual at the Bao Lam health station where I worked. In the early hours of the following day, Chinese

heavy artillery suddenly began to fire on us. Houses burst into flame. I quickly ran back to the village. On the road, I saw our troops taking up their positions. Chinese troops had reached Keo Kham village...

"Together with other civilians I was evacuated. I ran into a group of Chinese soldiers. They bound me hand and foot, tied me to a tree and hit me with the butts of their rifles. An interpreter kept telling me: "Tell us where the Vietnamese troop positions are if you want to live!" But I told them I knew nothing about Vietnamese troop disposition and they kept beating me until I fainted.

"After two days of interrogation and beating, they had still failed to draw any information from me, so they threw me onto a truck and took me across the border to Ping Xiang in China.

"At Na Lach, five kilometres from Ping Xiang I was led into a low windowless brick building and pushed onto the wet, dirty floor. About 70 people were kept there, mostly women and children. The children were crying from hunger. The adults were in rags and their faces were haggard. Their bodies were bruised from the beatings they had received. I recognized a few people from Bao Lam: Nang Viet Pao, Au Viet Uong, and a retired cadre Nang Han Dinh. I could not talk to them, only exchange glances. Eventually, however, Au Viet Cuong found an opportunity to edge close to me and whisper: "The Chinese treat our people cruelly. Some

children have died: Mr Trieu Ky Hung's one-year-old son and Mrs Nang Thi Vet's baby daughter'.

"I was transferred to another prison deeper inside Chinese territory the following day, my stomach still empty. Here too, there were many prisoners, this time mostly men. They were emaciated and their clothes were torn and blood-stained. We slept on the damp dirt floor, with no bedding.

"Two days later, I was thrown onto a truck and taken back to Vietnamese territory, Van Lang district, Lang Son. They wanted me to serve as a guide for them but I refused. They forced me to go with them at gunpoint anyway. On the way they seized a girl of about 25 and raped her until she died. Then they tore up her clothes and shared the pieces among themselves, as "victory souvenirs." Finally they took me to a cave in Keo Kham where they had stacked the corpses of about a hundred local victims. 'That's where you'll end up if you don't do what we say', they threatened me.

"Further on at Hin Phat in Bao Lam commune, they ran into our troops who opened fire, killing six of them. I was rescued.

"My daughter Au Thi Lien and my son Au Viet San told me how my wife had died: The Chinese soldiers put a rope round her neck and one pulled each end and strangled her."

The Chinese retreat

When forced to retreat, the Chinese troops continued shelling inside and around Pho Lu (Hoang Lien Son). Bridges and culverts were blown up with explosives. Civilians' houses were plundered and then burnt. Mines were planted inside and on roads and footpaths.

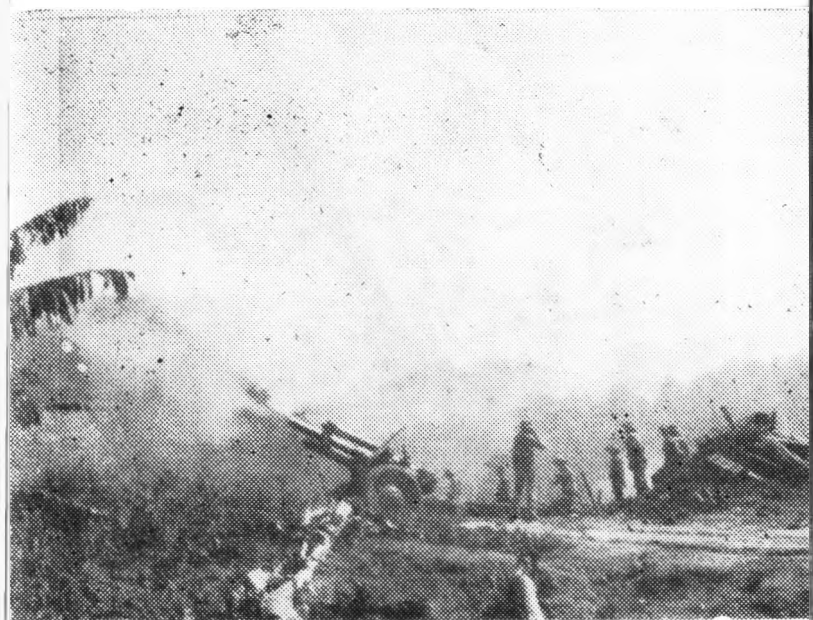
The same crimes were perpetrated elsewhere.

In Lang Son, three days after their declared retreat, they still fired shells and guns into the town and its outskirts.

The power station, the Ky Lua bridge, and other buildings were blown up. The Lang Son hospital was hit by hundreds of shells: not a single wall was left standing and not a single bed was intact. The Lang Son bank and railway station were destroyed with tons of explosives. Power lines and telephone wires were cut. The Japanese journalist Isao Takano died when his car was hit by machinegun bullets and mortar shells in Nguyen Thai Hoc street on the afternoon of 8 March 1979, several days after the Chinese declaration of retreat.

NGOC DAN

Nhan Dan, 11 March 1979



A Vietnamese artillery unit in Hoang Lien Son



Storming enemy positions over enemy corpses



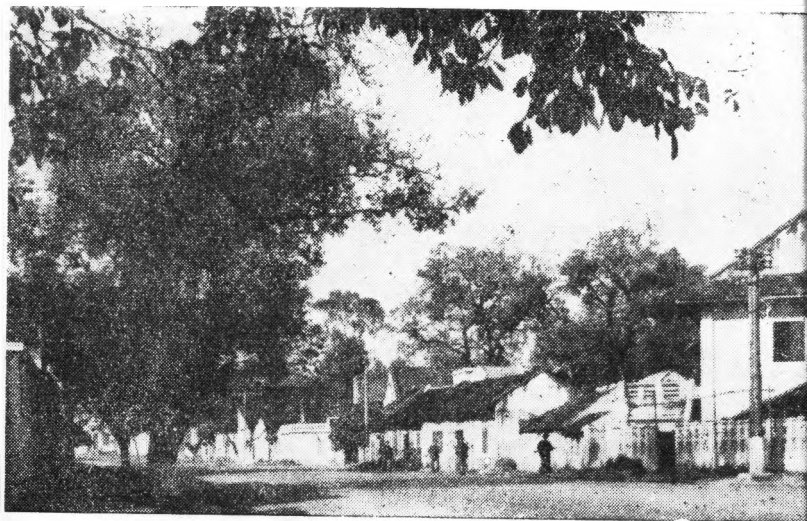
A Chinese tank destroyed in Cao Bang

Chinese P.O.W.s in Lang Son





Lang Son hospital destroyed by Chinese artillery fire



Lang Son town before...

...and after the Chinese aggression



A residential quarter at Pho Lu (Hoang Lien Son)
burned down by Chinese troops





Lang Son church damaged by Chinese artillery shells

A woman raped, killed, then thrown into a water tank
by Chinese troops (Ky Lua, Dong Dang, Lang Son)





Students of the History Faculty (Hanoi University) write their enlistment applications with their own blood



Hanoi youth starting for the front

PRINTED IN THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
OF VIETNAM

CHINA

KEY

- Vietnamese defence lines and counter-attacks
- Major engagements
- Chinese regiment put out of action
- Chinese battalions put out of action
- Destroyed Chinese artillery emplacements
- Destroyed Chinese rocket launchers
- Wreckage of Chinese tanks and armoured cars

Map Labels:

Regions: KUANGSI, KUANGTUNG, QUANG NINH, QUANG YEN, HONG AI.

Mountain Ranges: HOANG LIEN SON, CAO BANG.

Cities and Towns: MAI, PHO LU, PHO BANG, QUAN BA, THANH TRUY, HA GIANG, KIM HAN, THAI LONG, MUANG KHUONG, THANH BINH, DAN PHIE, PHONG HAI, LAO CAI, CAM DUONG, HO LU, SAPA, BINH LU, LAI CHAU, Tuyen Quang, YEN BINH, HIEN, NGHIA LO, YEN BAI, PHU THO, CAM KHE, HUNG HOA, VIET TRI, SON TAY, YEN VIEN, HANOI, PHU LO, BAC NINH, BAC GIANG, KEP, THAI NGUYEN, VO NHAI, DINH CA, BAC CAN, RA PHAC, NGAN SON, NGUYEN BINH, HOA AN, THONG NONG, HA QUANG, TRUONG KHANH, TRU LINH, QUANG HOA, PHUC HOA, DONG KHE, THACH AN, THAT KHE, LANG SON, TAM LUNG, DONG DANG, LANG SON, LOC BINH, CHI MA, HONH BO, BINH LIU, THANH PHU, HONG CAI, TIENYEN, HAI DUONG, HAIPHONG, HOA BINH, TUU, SON LA, YEN CHAU, MOC CHAU.

Scale: 80 100 km

CHINA

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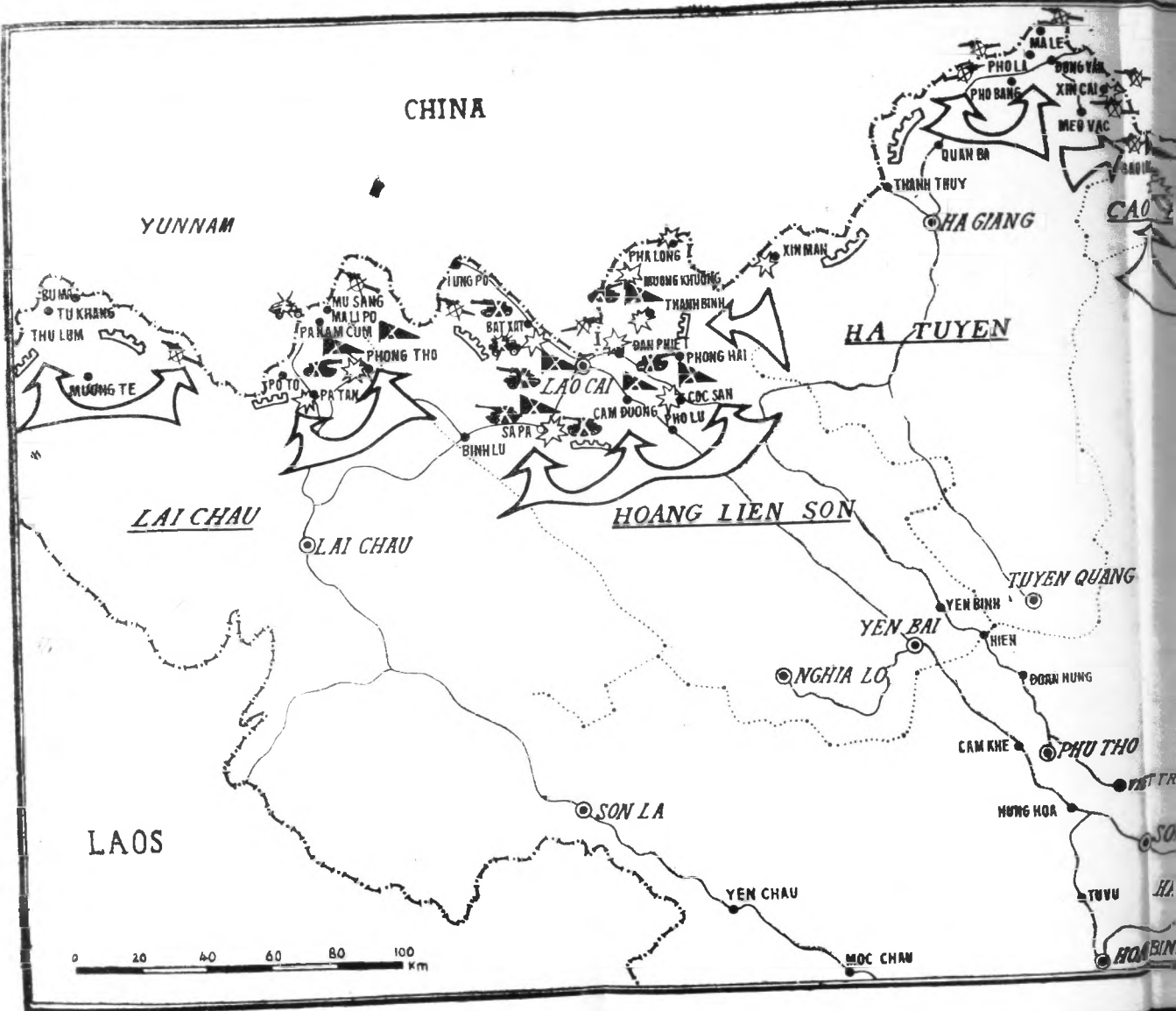
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Regions and Provinces: KUANGSI, KUANGTUNG, QUANG NINH, HA Tuyen, HOANG LIEN SON, CAO BANG, LANG SON.

Scale: 80 100 km

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